

Remarks

I. Status of Claims

Claims 1, 4-5, 8-10, 12-15, and 19-20 are currently pending. Claim 1 is the only independent claim. By this response, claims 1 and 4 are currently amended. Claims 2-3, 6-8, 11, and 16-20 are/were canceled without prejudice to and/or disclaimer of the subject matter therein.

Claims 1, 3-10, and 12-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Meacher *et al* (USP 5,858,569) (hereinafter “Meacher”) in view of Hiroshi *et al* (JP 11-339,828) (hereinafter “Hiroshi”) or unpatentable over Hiroshi in view of Meacher and further in view of Yoshimura *et al* (USP 6,921,094) (hereinafter “Yoshimura”).

Claims 18 and 20 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of these rejection in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

The Office Action indicates that claims 18 and 20 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

III. Pending Claims

Claim 1 is the only independent claim. As stated hereinabove, claim 18 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, without waiver of or prejudice to the subject matter of the scope of original claim 1, in order to facilitate prosecution, claim 1 is amended to include the subject matter of claims 3, 17, and 18.

Thus, the Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 is in condition for allowance.

IV. Conclusion

In light of the above discussion, the Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in all aspects in allowable condition, and earnestly solicits favorable reconsideration and early issuance of a Notice of Allowance.

The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at (202) 220-4420 for any further description or clarification on this response, or regarding any other matter concerning this application. The Office is authorized to charge any fees related to this communication to Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,

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